

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
(ADOPTED 10/25/04)**

**CLOSED SESSION, PRESENTATION, PUBLIC HEARING, REGULAR MEETING
& WORKSESSION OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Monday, September 13, 2004

Closed Session 9/13/04 - Moved by Seamens; seconded by Austin-Lane. On September 7, 2004, the Council voted unanimously to convene in Closed Session on September 13, 2004 at 6:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room. OFFICIALS PRESENT: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Seamens, Williams OFFICIALS ABSENT: Mizeur. STAFF/OTHERS PRESENT: Silber, Matthews, Waters, Cox (for part of the session). The Council convened at 6:40 p.m. to discuss legal issues related to construction of the Community Center and legal issues related to a personnel matter. (Authority: Annotated Code of Maryland, State Government Article, Section 10-508(a)(1)(i) and 10-508(a)(7).)

OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Mayor Porter	City Manager Matthews
Councilmember Austin-Lane	City Clerk Waters
Councilmember Barry	Deputy City Manager Hobbs
Councilmember Elrich	Police Chief Creamer
Councilmember Seamens	ECD Director Daines
Councilmember Williams	ECD Landlord/Tenant Manager Walker
	Assistant City Attorney Perlman

OFFICIAL ABSENT:

Councilmember Mizeur

The Council convened at 7:54 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Williams announced the September 29 Crime Gang Summit. There is still space for more participants. Mr. Williams said he hopes someone from staff attends.

Ms. Porter said that she is planning to attend. She serves on the Joint County Gang Task Force.

Mr. Williams said he has had an inquiry from a resident asking who is responsible for maintenance of a path behind the Municipal Building with orange fencing that is in disrepair. The City Manager is following up on the complaint.

Mr. Williams congratulated Public Works Director Lott on his graduation from the COG Institute for Regional Excellence program, noting that we now have four graduates from the City.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she appreciates that the Mayor has facilitated getting an additional agenda item on tonight. She listed some other items she would like to have scheduled: the development guidelines and the emergency preparedness committee. She noted the delay in scheduling of the emergency preparedness item.

Ms. Porter said she has spoken to the individuals who asked for this item and they are comfortable with the timing.

Ms. Austin-Lane noted that there are others concerned about this issue. Additionally, she requested the Mayor to schedule appointments for the Citizen Survey Committee and to place the Maple Avenue tree issue back on the Council agenda soon.

Mayor Porter said she will schedule the items as soon as possible.

Ms. Seamens announced that there will be a “Kerry for President” fundraiser event this weekend, on Maple Avenue. He invited the public to attend.

Mr. Barry remarked about the limitations on commercial vehicles that park on residential streets. The Police will ticket those in violation. Residents who have questions about what is allowable should call the Police Department.

Ms. Porter commented that we had a very successful Folk Festival this past weekend. There was a memorial for Lenore Robinson. The event was extremely well attended. Ms. Porter commended all who put effort into the festival and congratulated the participants.

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Porter announced that she was adding a resolution to make appointments to the Arts and Humanities Commission.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES - 1/5/04, 1/12/04

Moved by Williams; seconded by Seamens

Minutes for January 5 and 12 were adopted unanimously (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Elrich, Mizeur)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Wolfgang Mergner, asked for public support of Mark's Kitchen in their efforts to raise monies for the Maryland Leadership Program for Non-Profit Organizations. Mr. Mergner noted that he went through the training offered by the program.

Linda Kozat, Hillwood Manor Apartments, commented that the resident manager of the apartments was here last week to express her concern. There are safety issues. Ms. Kozat expressed concern about crime. This is not a personal attack on any individual. She noticed the burnt out lights on the building have been replaced, and commented that the building must be in line for an inspection. Otherwise, the lights are not replaced when needed. We should not look at the property and perceive it as the "norm." She said she tried to start a neighborhood watch, but the effort failed. Management seemed to want to cooperate. They promised locks on certain doors. Ms. Kozat said she has had her mail stolen. The laundry room is very scary. Locks were never placed on the doors. We were told by the City that we had to get a required number of forms signed by tenants to start a watch program. We met the requirement, but the police never attended the two scheduled meetings. The tenant watch group failed. Ms. Kozat also remarked about the vehicular crime instance with the taxi.

Ms. Matthews said she knows of one instance when a beat officer missed a meeting (was out of work several months); he failed to communicate in a way that another officer would attend in his absence. An officer has been in touch with the resident manager to schedule an upcoming meeting.

Mr. Seamens noted the public safety event taking place at the VFW in later September. He suggested Ms. Kozat contact Wolfgang Mergner or himself.

Lydia Jamie,? commented on the tree pruning around electrical wires. She encouraged that limbs be pruned.

Ms. Porter remarked about the agreement with PEPCO regarding tree trimming.

Yvonne Dunlap, Sligo Creek Parkway (along with three others in audience), commented on a fire that occurred as a result of fallen trees and electrical wires. The building was boarded up and declared un-inhabitable for about three years. There are still wires hanging which are identified as not being PEPCO wires.

Ms. Porter said we can ask Public Works to follow-up on the wires. If PEPCO puts a sign up that they are not responsible for wires, they are probably cable wires which should not have electrical current.

Ms. Dunlap thanked Mayor Porter. She said that 7171 Sligo Creek Parkway has other trees that may be in danger of compromise from electrical wires.

Nat ? President, Roanoke Avenue Citizens Association, asked if there is a police officer who can attend their meeting. He remarked about crime and security concerns (e.g. drug activities) and said we need a more responsive Police Department.

Ms. Porter responded that we have a community policing program. We can arrange for an officer to meet with your association. She suggested that Councilmember Elrich help to organize a meeting to involve the other adjacent buildings

Mr. Elrich said we can work toward re-establishing a neighborhood watch program there.

Mr. Seamens noted the Council priority related to drug enforcement.

PRESENTATION

1. Community Center Construction Project

Mr. Williams commented that there should be further Council discussion, after last week's comment about whether he or the City Manager should continue with the regular updates.

Mr. Seamens suggested that there be a more broad discussion of the issue next week.

Ms. Porter said there may not be adequate time on next week's agenda, but we will try to schedule it.

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Rent Stabilization

The Public Hearing was called to order at 8:27 p.m.

Yvonne Dunlap (Sligo Creek Neighborhood Association), introduced three other members of the association. Ms. Dunlap honored the city for having rent stabilization, the only remaining municipality in the state. It is the humane thing to do. We have a core of 12 families who are hardworking families. Rent stabilization allows them to be successful in their endeavors. There are maintenance issues on the property that could be fixed quite easily. We want to see rent stabilization stay in place.

Steve Wasser, 116 Lee Avenue, said that this is one of the only cities in the nation that continues to have rent stabilization. Mr. Wasser said that he is the Vice-Chair of COLTA, where a lot of time is spent on cases related to rent stabilization. Due to rent stabilization, revenues are reduced. It is a 60's issue. It died everywhere else, but the City is hanging on.

Diana Issa, said she once lived in the city. She said is sorry to hear that the City is going to remove rent control. She continues to visit friends who live in the city. Ms. Issa said she

wonders what the code enforcement officers are doing.

Ms. Porter clarified that the Council has not made a decision to remove rent control. We are having a public hearing on the topic.

Mr. Seamens thanked her for her testimony. He clarified her prior residence (115 Lee Avenue).

Nat ?, representing the Roanoke Avenue Citizens' Association, said he agrees with most of the previous speakers' remarks. He explained residents' concerns about capital improvements and petitions for rent increases. The process could be exploited. Council should study this. Tenants do not feel that they are participating in the process, but are looking for a way to better access related information. He proposed a web discussion group.

Mark Hessel, attorney, said he represents a group of landlords in the city. It is all about affordable housing. The problem with the City's program is that it is random. What is the public policy behind giving the benefit to those who do and do not need it? How do you know that the rent stabilization law is the best for the city? The City is the only jurisdiction in the state that has rent control. Takoma Park has produced a staff memo that was very limited in circulation. The basis of the content was that rent control preserves affordable housing.

Shanon Robey, said she thanks the Council for rent stabilization. She explained her experience with a landlord. Because of rent stabilization, she has been able to support herself without public assistance. Apartment buildings are plagued with roaches, rats and drug addicts. She is struggling to become a homeowner. Ms. Robey thanked Jean Kerr and Moses Wilds for answering questions.

Jack Holmes, said the city has built a reputation for affordable housing. To provide affordable housing to those who need it, it has been shown that rent stabilization is not the most efficient way to achieve the goal. He commented on the specific circumstances of tenants he knows and remarked about the lack of equity in rents for units subject to rent control. He said he does not expect rent control to go away in the city. Mr. Holmes said he hopes that the County takes a look at the 70% of CPI cap on the increase.

Rebecca Rippley, (with Matt Woodley) said she has an owner-occupied property that does not fall under rent stabilization. Maintenance on a property costs a considerable amount of money.

Matt Woodley, testified that in order to realize any income from the sale of their home, they will have to turn the home back into two single units.

Raffael Damen, said he recently purchased a building on Roanoke Avenue. He has had bad experiences with filing rent increase petitions. He remarked about the process. The system is antagonistic by design. It makes for a bad situation between landlords and tenants. The process is designed to discourage landlords from making improvements. Mr. Damen said he can cite examples.

Mr. Elrich requested a list of the discrepancies in writing

Carlos, 8213 Roanoke Avenue, commented on how the law applies to plumbing improvements. He remarked about claims he made for improvements for carpet and carpentry.

Shanon Robey clarified that the male speaker is thanking the City for having rent stabilization and for COLTA which affords residents an opportunity to challenge rent increases.

Jane Holmes, said she believes that rent control needs to be looked at. Sixty percent of housing stock in the city is rental units. Landlords try to supply well maintained apartments. The index needs to be changed to be based on housing costs and maintenance expenses. The capital improvement petition process works. She commented on the frequency of hardship and capital increase requests. The hardship petition process should be eliminated; standards are too difficult to meet. She said she likes the proposal to eliminate the law covering four or fewer units. Ms. Holmes encouraged discussion with the City about the law and encouraged forming a committee to discuss the issue with all stakeholders.

Avis Kelly, Roanoke Avenue, commented that rent stabilization is not working for her. She said that she has a building of 6 units. Paying over \$600/mos (utilities included). It is a very clean building. The building next to her has one-bedroom units that are going for over \$700 per month. We need to make some money too. What are we doing wrong? Ms. Kelly remarked about the county law regarding circuit breakers. She said she needs help and guidance. It is hard to provide documentation to make the hardship application effective.

Ellen Ensel, 8319 Roanoke Avenue, said she lives on top floor of her home. There are three units in the home. She said she was asked by Lauren Voloshen to convey that she, also, wants to keep rent stabilization. Ms. Ensel does not see the law as being enforced. She said that has been a tenant as well as a landlord. She suggested that the Council may want to look at the rent stabilization allowance. It should be based on something more than the CPI. It is intriguing to think of rent control as a means for affordable housing. It would be useful in making rents more standard.

Ms. Porter noted that Council has her written comments from the public forum in June.

Essex House tenant, commented on the hardship clause and the varying increases that are applied to individual units and identified some of the major factors which affect the rent.

Peter Arron, Carroll Avenue, said that he owns a small nine-unit building on Carroll Avenue. He is a conscientious landlord. He noted that the County has taken over inspection this year; it has been much more rigorous. He said he does not have a problem making the required improvements. While landlords are being held to higher inspection requirements, the City is sticking more to its petition requirements. It is a very burdensome process.

Larry Ravitz, commented that he owns the Wedgewood Apartments on Lee Avenue. He has

heard tenants and landlords who support his position. Cheap housing should not be the goal of rent control. We need a housing law that targets subsidies to those who need it. He remarked about the provisions of the law, which needs to be relaxed. Mr. Ravitz urged the Council to reintroduce vacancy control.

Nat ? (second comment), said that tenants feel that the improvements are not necessarily things that are needs of the tenants. He wants improvements to be relevant.

Mark Hessel (second comment), commented about the various statements made by other speakers. He said we have not yet heard from the homeowners who do not fall under this law.

Ms. Porter referred to the agenda item and the attached, written comments from the previous forum. She encouraged the Council to read the material.

Mr. Seamens noted that we heard some repeated comments this evening from the speakers' statements. He said he will address some questions about the issue with the City Manager.

Ms. Porter said that there will be other opportunities to comment in the future on this issue. We will continue this discussion. She encouraged residents to submit comments earlier, rather than later.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked that the record for the hearing be held open for the next week and asked whether there will be another public hearing.

Ms. Porter said that question is open to Council discussion.

Nat ? asked if the Council will facilitate discussions between tenants and landlords?

Ms. Porter said that is one of several strategies that may be adopted. We will try to follow-up with speakers tonight, about future discussions of this topic.

REGULAR MEETING

3. Ordinance re: Increase in Local Supplement to the State Homeowner Tax Credit Program.

Ms. Perlman explained the City's current supplement to the tax credit program.

In response to a request from Mr. Seamens for clarification about the program, Ms. Perlman said that taxes are paid, and the rebate is later issued. It depends on when a person applies for the tax credit.

Mr. Barry asked how many people apply for the tax credit and what is the cost?

Ms. Perlman said that Treasurer Waters will answer the question about the number of applicants. An additional \$25,000 was allocated in the FY05 budget.

Ms. Porter said this concept can be seen as an additional affordable housing initiative.

Ms. Perlman noted that, in theory, the program is based on income. This benefits people up to about \$26,000 of income.

Mr. Williams commented that he is glad we did this and is thankful for the additional information on how this works and what the parameters are. He said he thinks this is the main way, within state limitations, to provide more of a benefit.

Ms. Porter noted that Council could make this an item to be recommended for state legislation.

Moved by Williams; seconded by Seamens.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked why is this coming up now?

Ms. Porter replied that Council approved the funding for this increase as part of FY05 budget. This effects the change to the Code.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented on the delay in making the decision over the funding for tree replacement on Maple Avenue.

Ms. Porter replied that the Maple Avenue trees were not a line item in the budget. In the case of the tree replacement, the decision will involve taking more Council discussion.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she did not believe Council had a discussion about the merits of this program.

Mr. Williams noted that Council had a discussion during the budget process about the merits and decided to adopt the increase.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she believed the budget process was very truncated. This seems like putting the cart before the horse.

Ms. Porter said she believed that the point has been made. Members of the Council who do not want to support the ordinance can vote in opposition.

Ordinance #2004-27 was accepted at first reading (VOTING FOR: Porter, Barry, Seamens, Williams; ABSTAIN: Austin-Lane; ABSENT: Elrich, Mizeur).

ORDINANCE #2004-27
(attached)

4. Resolution re: Eighth Amended and Restated LGIT Agreement.

Mr. Hobbs explained the need for the resolution. The Local Government Insurance Trust closed out the health insurance pool earlier in the summer. The only way to get rid of the deficit immediately is to put the burden on the towns which are part of that pool. It would have been difficult for some of the smaller towns. The other pools are in very good health; most have pretty good surpluses. In fact, we will probably be receiving a credit on our liability insurance over the next three years. He recommended support of the resolution.

Ms. Porter restated that the recommendation is that the City be part of the two-thirds of LGIT members needed to support the agreement.

Moved by Williams; seconded by Seamens.

Mr. Seamens asked if there are any downsides to supporting the agreement?

Mr. Hobbs said LGIT would be using money that would be coming back to the city for other purposes. The pool was put together to be a self-supporting coalition where one jurisdiction supports another. This has proven to be a very good economical thing for jurisdictions in the state.

Ms. Porter re-emphasized that the purpose of the insurance pool is that all members support each other.

Resolution #2004-44 was adopted unanimously (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Elrich, Mizeur).

RESOLUTION #2004-44 (attached)

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEM

5. Resolution re: Appointments to Arts & Humanities Commission (AHC).

Ms. Porter explained that there are four vacancies with four sitting members seeking reappointment and one new applicant.

Mr. Seamens said he found this difficult. We do not often have the situation of more applicants than vacancies. In communications with the commission, he has heard concern about the large size (15 members). He said he would not be supportive of increasing the size of the committee. He recommended appointments of the applicants with exception of David Lorentz. Mr. Seamens noted that Mr. Lorentz has been active in the city said he feels sure that Mr. Lorentz will continue his involvement in other activities.

Moved by Seamens; seconded by Austin-Lane.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that the Arts and Humanities Commission has very good representation from Ward 1. She said she trusts that David Lorentz will remain involved. We do not want someone new who is coming forward to be discouraged.

Ms. Porter said she supports the motion and that she was impressed with Ms. Shillingburg's interview. Ms. Porter said she would have also supported the appointment of Dave Lorentz, who she recognizes does not always agree with the sentiment of the commission.

Ms. Austin-Lane said that, at this point, she would support the motion and go with the recommendation of the chair of the commission.

Mr. Seamens said he looks forward to continuing to hear from David Lorentz on his views regarding the arts.

Resolution #2004-45 was adopted unanimously (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Mizeur).

**RESOLUTION #2004-45
(attached)**

Following a scheduled break at 9:57 p.m., the Council reconvened in Worksession.

WORKSESSION

Ms. Porter announced that Council had scheduled a worksession on rent stabilization for September 20, but, since that date was published, it was realized that we will need to devote a good amount of time to discussion of the Community Center project. The rent stabilization discussion will be rescheduled.

Mr. Seamens announced that during the break he heard that a rabid racoon had been found in the vicinity of Cedar Avenue. He encouraged residents to keep an eye on their pets.

Chief Creamer provided more information about the racoon report. A girl on Philadelphia Avenue was bitten over the weekend. In another incident over the weekend, a racoon on Cedar Avenue appeared to be rabid. It was killed, sent out for analysis, and determined to have rabies. Parents should be aware of children playing in their yards and be mindful of their pets.

6. Cross-Jurisdictional Crime Prevention.

Chief Creamer said she is here this evening to brief Council on an idea that she will be pursuing on cross-jurisdictional crime prevention. Streets immediately adjacent to the Metro serve as a main pedestrian thoroughfare. Neighborhoods in close proximity to that area have not been

immune to persons seeking to rob and commit other crimes. The Police Department has been largely reactionary. We increase uniform police presence in the area; work with the community to get the word out; and work jointly with other police forces in the area. Most recently there were a series of street robberies; three that happened at the end of July. These are the crimes that are happening as people are walking down the street. The most recent victims were a family of two adults with two young children. There was a community meeting at the church at Tulip and Maple, where next steps were discussed. We started with a look at the area to examine which things might lend to an unsafe environment. The walk in the neighborhood took place at night. There were a number of deficiencies noted at that time (e.g., inadequate lighting, overgrown vegetation, etc.). A list was developed and shared with the neighborhood. Follow-up will occur with the subject properties. The Public Works Department will be following up with PEPCO about light replacements and repairs.

Chief Creamer said she would like to pursue a replication of the C-SAFE model which currently exists in the Takoma-Langley area. She commented on the focus of the program. The situation is more than ripe to bring this type of model over to this part of town. We have had border issues, when sharing of information is very important. We have worked well with DC and Metrorail authorities in the past. The program brings representatives from state and local governments, residents, business owners, and others together. The general idea is to gain support from the leaders in the other jurisdictions (e.g., DC Chief Ramsey, Metro Transit Police, etc.). She said she thinks that the commanders of the Silver Spring and Hyattsville police stations have found the program to be very useful. Approaching representatives to gain support for this initiative is the first step. The next step would be to see what it would cost to get the program off the ground and then seek funding. The Takoma-Langley model in the crossroads area has a program coordinator. The program has grown over the last few years, but the funding has not increased. Prince George's County and Montgomery County have found value in the program; both have dedicated money and resources to keep the C-SAFE program going in the crossroads. Prince George's County has expressed willingness to fund a second organizer. The program will have two community organizers in addition to the program director (John Brill). There is an oversight committee that meets monthly. We want to keep the overall effort on track and ensure that the strategy remains intact. There is a lack of information sharing taking place between Maryland and DC officials regarding crime suspects.

Chief Creamer said she hopes that she has conveyed the value of a program like this. She has shared the idea with the Public Safety Citizens Advisory Committee and they support the idea. The community is interested in this program and would like to see the initiative more forward.

Chief Creamer said she is not asking the Council for funding at this point. She will have her work cut out for her to find funding. She estimates that it will take about \$150,000 to get the program off the ground. She is fairly confident that she can find some grant monies for the program.

Mr. Elrich said he would like to see the proposal fleshed out with costs. He wants to see how the costs would be shared with the other jurisdictions involved. If this is a good idea and effect, we

may have to do it whether there are grant monies or not. He said he wonders if there is any data that measures the effectiveness of the program in the crossroads area.

Chief Creamer said some representatives from the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention have been claiming the crossroads model as a successful program in the state. They look at the community capacity building, the in-roads made, along with a variety of other things. There are periodic events that involve all participating jurisdictions. She noted the number of arrests and the tickets that were issued in a recent drunk driving stop which was conducted along University Boulevard. The new proposal will not be an easy endeavor—getting the counties, DC and the Transit Police involved in a new program.

Mr. Seamens thanked Chief Creamer for bringing this forward. During the budget process, he had proposed cutting several officers from the budget in order to balance the budget. Having observed the activities of the police, which appear to be 95% traditional policing and very little crime prevention, he felt they could operate without some officers. He expressed concern about talking about an isolated neighborhood and said he sees little benefit to the rest of the city. What was described tonight sounds a lot like community oriented policing. If we could apply the focuses of the program city-wide, we would have a much safer city. He recalled the walk through the neighborhood and noted they established a list of pole numbers where street lights need replacement. The officers once reported pole numbers where lights needed repair; they do not do that anymore. The police should do this function; it is a public safety matter. It is important to address the attitude and culture that keeps the officers from being more cooperative across borders. It has been several years since the police have addressed drugs in a proactive fashion. He said he will have a difficult time supporting a C-SAFE program that only addresses a couple of neighborhoods. He has neighborhoods in his ward that need focus.

Chief Creamer said that there are clear boundaries defined with the C-SAFE initiative. The main area is the emphasis, but there are other areas of the city that benefit from the C-SAFE initiative. She envisions the same thing happening if we are able to replicate the Crossroads model. Chief Creamer remarked about the tour that took place in Ward 1. There is a plan in the future to hold a similar event, with our officer working with the DC officer. She commented on current vacancies in the department, candidates, and the next steps to fill vacancies.

Mr. Seamens said he appreciates the improvements she has made in the department. He wants to see more than a ripple effect from this, into his neighborhood. He wants some direct attention to his neighborhood.

Ms. Austin-Lane thanked Chief Creamer for her work on this proposal and offered to assist in this effort. This is more than a parochial issue that only affects residents in the adjacent neighborhood. She is encouraged by the proposal. It is new and has resulted in success in the crossroads. She urged Chief Creamer to continue the focus efforts. No one thing will resolve the problem; however, initiatives of this kind will move the effort forward. She said she would appreciate information about a time frame.

Ms. Porter said we have police issues in all neighborhoods of the city. They are different and have different origins as to why the crimes occur across the city. She commented on the unique situation with the Metro. Ms. Porter said she agrees with Mr. Elrich's comment about wanting to see more of a written proposal. It may be that members of Council should assist by getting in touch with officials outside of the city.

Mr. Barry said that the C-SAFE program in the crossroads is effective. He noted that the drug related crimes are down. We need to keep an eye on the larger context. The program may need to be fine tuned. The community organizer plays an important role. The program needs to be tailored to the community.

Mr. Seamens said he agrees that it is important to tailor the program to specific neighborhood. He said that he would like to see a comprehensive plan to deal with other neighborhoods.

Ms. Austin-Lane requested a time table

Ms. Porter asked Chief Creamer keep the Council abreast of grant options. There are opportunities with DC for a positive conversation.

Mr. Williams commented on budgetary considerations. He recalled the grant funding that brought new officers to the force. He encouraged the Chief to find ways to get the buy-in from other jurisdictions.

Chief Creamer noted that grant funding for this program is different. We don't want the money/program to go away. We think that Prince George's County will offer approximately \$45,000 to fund the additional community organizer position for the C-SAFE program.

Ms. Austin-Lane acknowledged that there are some Maple Avenue residents in the audience.

Ms. Porter said that Council will continue this discussion at a later date. This has been a very helpful walk-through.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked who will call the follow-up community meeting.

Ms. Matthews said that staff can arrange that with Wolfgang Mergner. We will try to organize it for later in the month.

7. Committee on the Environment.

Mr. Williams has been serving as liaison to the committee in this discussion. The Committee on the Environment has been mulling over the idea of becoming an official city committee for over a year. He said he thinks this is something that we need to do. He had a conversation with a couple of members over the weekend who had some concern about some of the language in the draft ordinance. In discussion with them, he did not have difficulty in changing or striking some

of the items. We should move forward with making the Committee on the Environment an official committee. It will go far toward ensuring better communications.

Catherine Tunis said she has always thought of the Committee on the Environment as an official committee. There is language in the ordinance that is not consistent with where the membership wants to see this discussion go. We want to talk about concepts and direction to the committee. We want to be involved from the beginning. We want the committee to be environmentally friendly. Even though we have talked about this concept for some time, seeing it here tonight is a bit of a surprise. She noted some things that would be helpful in making the committee more effective. (1) Bring the committee in earlier in discussions. (2) Set aside a budget for the committee. (3) As to recruitment of members, we want long-term members. The committee wants to recommend members to the Council, members who the committee believes are committed to working with the Committee on the Environment.

Ms. Porter said that in terms of moving forward, it seems there are some good suggestions. Her sense is that the Council is favorable with moving forward to make the Committee on the Environment a statutory committee. She suggested that Councilmember Williams work with the group to finalize the language.

Mr. Williams proposed that Daryl Braithwaite also be included. He asked that the discussions take place and that the item come back to the Council for discussion/adoption prior to Thanksgiving.

Mr. Seamens asked what is the underlying current among Committee on the Environment members?

Ms. Tunis said there is still some angst among members. The previous City Manager limited assistance to the committee.

Mr. Seamens said he recalls coming forward with a concern that the Committee on the Environment was being marginalized.

Ms. Tunis said we are working to correct that.

Robert Goo commented that a big concern has to do with communication patterns. We want to feel that we have a free voice.

Mr. Elrich noted that a free voice travels both directions. He wants staff to have the opportunity to state positions that may not concur with those of the Committee on the Environment. He is not comfortable with the notion of the committee making decisions about appointments. He would not support anything giving the committee any control over appointments. No other committee makes their own appointments.

Ms. Porter said she agrees with Mr. Elrich. She noted that other committees do recruitment of

members who are later appointed by the Council.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that the Council wants to have a Committee on the Environment that is sanctioned by the City. It makes sense. She referred to the Arts and Humanities Commission and its composition. The commission has a small budget and a staff person assigned as a liaison. She said she would agree with the proposal that we keep moving forward with this; resolve the remaining issues; and vote on this prior to Thanksgiving. She commented on the concern about the Committee on the Environment expressing an independent view. The committee can come to Council with any view. The issue is when you go to the outside with a position that is not sanctioned by the Council as a City position.

Mr. Seamens said he is not sure why this is necessary; why at this point?

Mr. Williams responded. He commented on the merits of a statutory committee (e.g., built-in process and goals). Some connections are easier to be made in a more formal arrangement. Having a staff liaison identified will help ensure communications.

Ms. Porter agreed. This is a way of making sure that things are clarified.

Ms. Tunis said she sees this as a formality. She does not see why in the past five years the Committee on the Environment was not invited to participate in discussions. We don't feel comfortable doing research, writing papers or making testimony if we do not feel that the Council wants the input of the committee.

Mr. Goo said he sees this as a positive step. This sets up a communication protocol.

Ms. Tunis said she does not think that there was ever a time, after the Council took a position, when the Committee on the Environment took a different position. She noted the one instance when the committee put forth a letter.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she wants to make sure that it is clear that Council wants the committee's input. It does not have to be in lock step with the opinions of staff or Councilmembers.

Ms. Tunis said she thinks it is a role of the committee to be a liaison to citizens who do not know how to articulate their suggestions and concerns to the Council.

Ms. Porter said we need to formalize the committee and all have the same understanding of what the committee is going to do. She is hearing that the Council wants to move in this direction.

Ms. Austin-Lane said it would be helpful to have a goal as to the timing for this to come back to the Council.

Mr. Seamens said he wants to see the work move forward, but he has a concern about the "control." We should consider why this committee has been successful.

Ms. Tunis asked if other Councilmembers are interested in helping with the discussion.

Mr. Seamens and Mr. Elrich both expressed interest.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned for the evening at 11:41 p.m.